

Remarks from Sheriff Gary Hofmann to Heroin Task Force ** See bottom note*

I wanted to give a special thanks to Gov. Larry Hogan as to Lt. Gov. Boyd Rutherford for including me as a participant in this panel.

A little bit about my background, in my third term is Sheriff, appointed to the Maryland state board of victim services, previous president of the Maryland sheriffs Association, currently fourth vice president of the Maryland sheriffs Association, and chairman of the Queen Anne's County's drug task force.

Today we've all come together as a group to address a problem that knows no socioeconomic boundaries nor does it care about one's ethnicity.

If we were to go around the room and asked all law enforcement agencies to share similar information, all the stories would be the same however only the locations and faces would be different.

Several years ago law enforcement agencies across the state took great effort to reduce a problem of opiate abuse that started plaguing our community. We aggressively addressed doctors, pharmacists and the community about prescription drug abuse. We started programs such as drug roundups, education consumers to dispose of medications so they would not end up in the hands of our community. We worked with other healthcare providers and community partners. The message was strong and aggressive and we reduced prescription abuse. Partnerships include are drug-free coalition

we have added tools such as Narcan for police responders

As a law enforcement official one of the main concerns in our community is what happens to a person who has an addiction issue and cannot receive proper treatment, or don't know how to to reduce their dependency. We all know the purchasing heroin is a much cheaper alternative than the typical prescription medication available on the street.

All of us in law enforcement have been in the position where we have had that family member come into our office sit down with us and discuss the relative whom is spiraling out of control due to an addiction issue. Often the families are shamed to ask for help or report crimes that have occurred to them.

I recall a very emotional and distraught affluent father who recently came into my office and wanted to talk to me about his son's addiction. He advised me that he discovered that his son after stealing almost \$50,000 from the family. He admitted he denied ever wanting to acknowledge that this was occurring in his family. He advised he has tried intervention with his son, and attempted to get him its treatment. However, he advised that he was unsuccessful in these efforts. He asked me with the options were and I advised that he needed to take the path of criminally charging his son and getting him into the system. He advised me that he didn't want his child to have a criminal record because of his chemical dependency. I looked at the father and advised him that if he didn't take aggressive action quickly his son may forever have a headstone. As hard as this was for me to tell a father this, I've never been in their shoes. But sadly we've all seen the scenes and read the reports of the person found with a heroin overdose, and grieving family members wondering why they didn't intervene sooner either with the treatment or criminal charges

Successfully the father agreed to do the charges and our office arrested the son. I believe our efforts saved this young man's life, as he awaited in the detention center for his court trial.

There is a downside to this; we took a young man who has a heroin addiction and placed him in a population of the criminal element. Some of my colleagues may disagree but I don't believe that ever drug abuser should be incarcerated unless they have committed crimes they need to be held accountable for.

Heroin is driving our thefts from cars, copper thefts, burglaries, and most burglaries are occurring from within the inner circle of the family or friends, they are the victims.

The issue of heroin and opiate addiction stems back in time as far as you care to research, I think it's also incumbent upon our federal partners to assist us with reducing this as its imported into the United States by securing our boundaries.

Heroin trafficking was virtually eliminated in the U.S. during World War II because of the temporary trade disruptions caused by the war. Japan's war with China had cut the normal distribution routes for heroin and the war had generally disrupted the movement of opium, today heroin is back

I think it's important as were demonstrating today that all of the stakeholders take aggressive and firm action against the issue that is claiming so many innocent lives. It's not just claiming the life and causing death it's taking a productive member of society and disabling their life and their families.

The issue of opiates reaches further than just the level of addiction' it creates crime within our communities and causes death. These are the issues that law enforcement is faced with and challenged with on a daily basis. I look forward to sitting here with so many wonderful colleagues and partners so together we can assist our community on reducing, treating and eventually eliminating this opiate and disease.

Thank you for having me on this panel, It is with great honor to speak before you.

*** These are the notes, however due to time constraints; this may have been modified from original content. Sheriff Gary Hofmann Queen Anne's County, Md. 03-28-2015*